

Conflict Resolution Workshop

Prepared by the Conflict Resolution Workshop Task Force

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Conflict Resolution Workshop

Table of Contents

Conflict Resolution Workshop Overview	3
Table of Resources	5
Part One–Panel Discussion	6
Part Two–3 Break-Out Sessions Overview	9
Part Two–Break-Out Session 1	10
The Skit: Jill and Ron want to offer babysitting at the meeting	10
Part Two–Break-Out Session 2	14
The Skit: Al-Anon meetings that are not receptive to Alateen attendance	14
Part Two–Break-Out Session 3	20
The Skit: Moving the Location of the Area Assembly	20

Conflict Resolution Workshop Overview

1. Background:

The Conflict Resolution Workshop Task Force was charged with the task of preparing a workshop that:

- Can be used by any Areas, Districts, and groups
- Utilizes the Conference Approved Literature, specifically the Conflict Resolution tools
 - *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflict (S-71)*, the Wallet Card
 - *Conflict Resolution Using Our Twelve Traditions (S-72)*, the Tradition Cards
 - *Talk to Each Other – Resolving Conflicts with Al-Anon (S-73)*, the Booklet
- Takes into consideration Concept Five: “The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard.”

2. A Workshop differs from a meeting:

The Task Force made the distinction between an Al-Anon meeting and a workshop:

- A workshop typically runs for an hour to an hour and a half as part of an Assembly or an Area Convention, as a break-out session. An Assembly or Convention with a large number of participants could ‘break out’ into several sessions, each with a smaller number of people.
- A workshop could be a day-long event put on by a District, an AIS, or Service Center.
- A workshop involves group interaction between participants, and between participants and the presenters.
- A workshop differs from our usual Al-Anon meeting practice in which members do not engage in a dialogue.

3. The Task Force offers a template that can expand or contract according to the users’ needs or wants:

The template offers two parts, Part One: A Panel Discussion and Part Two: Three Breakout Sessions:

- Part One: A Panel Discussion
 - Part One is the Panel Discussion, running about 60 minutes
 - The Panel consists of four panel members, who present their material for about 10-15 minutes each.
 - The remaining time would be used for a question and answer/comments section.
 - Part One can be a stand-alone workshop

- Or Part One can be the first part of a day-long workshop, followed by the breakout sessions in Part Two
- Part Two: Breakout Sessions
 - Part Two is a set of three breakout sessions, each running about 45 minutes.
 - Session #1 models a group conflict
 - Session #2 models a District conflict
 - Session #3 models an Assembly conflict
 - Part Two Sessions could be:
 - The second half of a day-long workshop, preceded by the Panel Discussion (as described above)
 - Each of the three breakout sessions could stand alone as a 60-to-90-minute workshop, with the addition of a short introduction to the Conflict Resolution practices covered in Part One's Panel Discussion materials

4. For a full day workshop, the Task Force suggests the following schedule:

- Pre-Workshop:
 - Conference Approved Literature table, with ample copies of S-71, S-72, and S-73 for sale
 - Coffee and refreshments
- Opening: All participants gathered in one large room
 - Serenity Prayer
 - Reading of the Legacies
 - Introduction of panel members by workshop host
- Panel Discussion:
 - Panel members each share for 10 to 15 minutes
- Questions from the floor:
 - For remainder of allotted time, approximately 60 to 90 minutes total
- Break:
 - Brown Bag Lunch
 - Conference Approved Literature (CAL) table
- Breakout sessions: three sessions run simultaneously, approximately 45 minutes, in three smaller rooms (If your schedule permits, have participants rotate to a different session, for another 45 minutes)
 - Session #1
 - Session #2
 - Session #3
- Closing:
 - Close in session room or reconvene in main room if desired

5. For a shorter workshop:

- A group, District, or Area could choose Part One alone, or any of the breakout sessions of Part Two, according to its own needs or preferences.

Table of Resources

2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual, Version 2 (P-24/27)

Using Al-Anon Principles to Resolve Conflicts (K-70)

- *Talk to Each Other (S-73)*
- *Conflict Resolution using our Twelve Traditions (S-72)*
- *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflict (S-71)*

How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics (B-32)

The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage (B-4)

Paths to Recovery—Al-Anon’s Steps, Traditions, and Concepts (B-24)

Guidelines for groups, Areas and AIS/LDCs: located on the al-anon.org member page

Safety in Al-Anon Meetings: located at <https://al-anon.org/pdf/Safety-in-Al-Anon-meetings.pdf>

Part One—Panel Discussion

For a half-day District workshop – three to four hours

- Use the Panel Discussion and the question-and-answer segment.
- Follow this segment with the three breakout sessions described in Part Two.
- Each participant is given the *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflict* Wallet Card (S-71) as part of the registration. Have ample supply of the other two pieces of conflict resolution CAL available for sale, if desired.

For a 60-to-90-minute workshop

- Use the Panel Discussion, followed by a question-and-answer segment.
- This could be used for a breakout session at an Assembly or at an Area Convention.
- The following bullet points in each of the Panel Member boxes are to be used as a guideline for the Panel Member to plan his or her 15-minute presentation.

Four Member Panel – One hour approximately

Panel members speak for about 15 minutes each

Panel Members refer participants to the *Conflict Resolution Wallet Card*

Panel Member #1 Introduce the *Wallet Card*

“Conflict is a disagreement where parties perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns” *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflict* (S-71).

Conflict:

- Is a part of every relationship
- Can be constructive if used to make a relationship better
- Can be destructive if used to win, dominate, or punish the other person

Ways people deal with conflict:

Negative ways of coping:

- Avoiding conflict
- Attacking the other person
- Minimizing the conflict
- Issuing threats

Positive ways of coping:

- Engaging in a meaningful discussion
- Treating the other person with respect and courtesy
- Listening actively
- Staying on the topic
- Maintaining a pleasant tone of voice and demeanor

Panel Member #2

Communication during a conflict: Speaking Respectfully

Communication involves: (see *How Al-Anon Works* [B-32], p. 98])

- What we say and what we do not say
- Our body language – facial expressions, posture, attentiveness, and eye contact
- Our tone of voice
- Our attitude

“Five Guides to Communication” from *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage* (B-4), p. 30-32

- Discuss, don’t attack
- Keep your voice low and pleasant
- Stick to the subject
- Listen to the other person’s complaints
- Don’t make demands

Panel Member #3

Communication during a conflict: Actively Listening

Guidelines to improve listening skills: (see the *Wallet Card* and *How Al-Anon Works*, p.98-99)

- Stop talking
- Show your interest in what the other person has to say
- Give the other person the time needed to express his or her thoughts
- Don’t interrupt or finish another’s sentences for them
- Don’t stop listening and plan in your head what you’re going to say next
- Am I allowing resentments to prevent me from hearing the other person?
- It’s okay to ask for a break if you are feeling overwhelmed
- Remember our slogan, “Listen and Learn”
- Remember to “bring your mind to where your body is,” *Hope for Today*, p. 158

Panel Member #4
Applying Concept Five to Conflict Resolution

Concept Five: "The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard."

From *Paths to Recovery*, p. 278:

- Listen with consideration to everyone
- Everyone may state their views
- Maintain unity by respecting all views
- Incorporating minority opinions into our discussion may help us avoid mistakes caused when we are angry, hasty, misinformed, or rigid
- Listening to a minority voice may bring about a solution we had never thought about

Resolution is a solution to the disagreement:

- Coming to a new understanding
- Agreeing on a new way forward
- Finding a compromise
- Agreeing to disagree
- Agreeing that some conflicts are unable to be resolved

Panel then takes questions from workshop participants as schedule permits

Break and Brown Bag Lunch

Literature Table

Go to three breakout sessions

Part Two–Three Breakout Sessions Overview

Below are three fictitious scenarios that have the potential to create conflict with individuals and groups. The objective of these exercises is not just to arrive at a decision, but to stop talking; listen to other points of view; look, act, and be interested; and presume goodwill. We always want to keep Concept Five in mind: “The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard.”

Preface:

Conflict can happen in any situation, even in Al-Anon! It is important to keep in mind that we all want the best for Al-Anon, but we may not agree on what that looks like or know how to handle uncomfortable issues in a healthy way. Use of the *Conflict Resolution Tool Kit (S-70)* components can aid individuals, as well as groups, in learning how to handle conflict in a loving, understanding, and constructive way.

Setting the Tone:

Before bringing forward a topic that might create conflict, it is important that we “Let It Begin with Me.” Can the matter be resolved on a personal level by using the *Wallet Card (S-71)*, talking to a Sponsor, a Service Sponsor, or reasoning it out with someone else? We understand that disagreements happen, and that not all of us have the same understanding of the spiritual principals of Al-Anon. When we have examined our side of the issue and believe that it is an important topic, we can then ask for time on an agenda to have a discussion.

The Breakout Session Agenda:

Have participants act out the skit. The intent of the skit is to exaggerate the conflict. This will be followed by post-skit discussion groups. You may want to have a recorder to document the discussion for each group, and report back to the larger group. Using the wisdom of Al-Anon principles found in the *Conflict Resolution Tool Kit (S-70)* will help the groups achieve a loving interchange regarding the conflicts that were presented.

Part Two—Breakout Session One

Resolving a Group Conflict with the *Conflict Resolution Kit*

This group scenario session includes: A skit about a group conflict for a babysitting request and a Post-Skit Discussion Guide for a follow-up group conscience meeting to help resolve it. Use this at an Assembly workshop, a group conscience, or group inventory meeting.

- Invite members to participate by attending, chairing, or volunteering to be a skit actor
- You will need a narrator for the skit and a chairperson to lead the post-skit discussion (One member may do both roles)
- You will need 11 skit actors (some actors can read more than one part)
- Give everyone a copy of the skit
- Ask members to read the three items in the *Conflict Resolution Kit*, S-71, S-72, and S-73
- Have fun

The Break-Out Session:

- Act out the skit. The intent of the skit is to exaggerate a conflict
- Follow-up with the Post-Skit Discussion Guide. The guide helps you achieve a new loving interchange among members on the conflict acted out in the skit. The Guide outlines the wisdom of Al-Anon principles from the *Conflict Resolution Kit*, S-71, S-72, and S-73 and from Concept Five: “The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard.”
- Allow sufficient time (we recommend a minimum of one hour)

The Skit: Jill and Ron want to offer babysitting at the meeting

The scenario: Two group members want to offer babysitting for members during meetings.

MARY, GR: Before we start the meeting, Jill and Ron asked to bring up a suggestion for the meeting.

JILL: Thank you Mary. Yes, Ron and I would like to ask about the possibility of offering babysitting during our meeting. I know lots of members who cannot come to our meeting because they don't want to interrupt the meeting with their kids.

KAREN (*angrily*): So, you're saying my kids are interrupting!

RON: That is not what we're saying, we just thought if we would offer—

(Ron is cut off by Lee.)

LEE (*impatiently*): Why are we wasting time? We don't do babysitting. Let them get their own, and let's get on with the meeting.

RON: If you would let me explain—

SUE: I agree with Lee. I'm not spending my donations on a babysitter. Let's get on with the meeting.

LINDA: Well, we do have sufficient funds and my daughter could use some extra money babysitting.

PAT: I like the idea of babysitting. I'd like to explore the possibility.

JULIE: Yeah, I think I know some people who would use babysitting.

KAREN (*still angry*): Well, if I can't bring my kids, I'm not coming to this meeting.

JILL: We are just suggesting we could offer babysitting.

CATHY (*sarcastically*): And I'm saying, Karen, your kids are interrupting the meeting.

MARY: Okay. This is getting out of hand. Let's just take a vote and get this over with.

LOIS: Wait, let's have another discussion and see how we can use our three Legacies. We can use the *Conflict Resolution Kit*. The *Talk to Each Other* booklet in the Kit recommends we invite everyone to participate and to be sure to give ample notice that we'll be having an informed group conscience meeting.

(End of Skit)

The Post-Skit Discussion: A Guide to a Loving Interchange

Everyone has a copy of this tool and the *Conflict Resolution Kit*. You may ask for a timekeeper to help keep the meeting on track.

The chair opens the meeting.

- Open with the Al-Anon Declaration or the Serenity Prayer
- Ask members to share on these questions:
 - How has my attitude and experience influenced my ability to participate, listen, and presume goodwill? Refer to the wallet card: *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflict (S-71)*.
 - How could I say something from the skit differently to improve the tone of the discussion?



During the Discussion:

- Refer to the “Resolving Conflict in the group” chapter or the “Resolving conflict through an informed group conscience” chapter of *Talk to Each Other—Resolving Conflicts within Al-Anon (S-73)*.
- Ask the “Preparing for Discussion” questions that are in the *Wallet Card*.
- Share on what principles and Traditions apply by referring to the *Conflict Resolution using our Twelve Traditions cards (S-72)*.



Before the Discussion Closes, ask: Was the minority heard?

- Were there minority opinions? Apply Concept Five to any that surfaced.
- What are the spiritual principles in the minority points of view?

For Reflection for the Discussion:

- Singleness of purpose, Tradition Three: Does having a babysitter fall into our singleness of purpose?
- A minority opinion, Concept Five: I don't have kids, so I won't use this. I don't think this falls into our purpose.
- Autonomy, Tradition Four: Having a babysitter would allow less disruption in the group and allow members with small kids to come.

- A minority opinion, Concept Five: Did we consider how this may affect groups that do not have babysitting? I don't want to let my kid be with a stranger. They can be quiet in the corner.
- Abundance, Tradition Seven: Do we have money to pay for babysitting? Can we get a volunteer?
- A minority opinion, Concept Five: If we have a volunteer babysitter, are we being self-supporting?
- A minority opinion, Concept Five: Although the majority may agree, I can always find another meeting if I do not agree.

Warranty Three of Concept Twelve teaches us inclusiveness. It suggests we listen to all viewpoints; value seeking consensus; and strive for substantial unanimity.

Part Two—Break-Out Session 2

Resolving a District Conflict with the *Conflict Resolution Kit*

Workshop Instructions and Suggestions:

- Provide all workshop participants with a copy of the *Wallet Card* (S-71).
- A list of additional possible conflicts could be provided and used by groups to choose one and discuss using Conflict Kit materials.
- Have a recorder to document ideas and report back to the larger group.
- Any of these suggestions can be used in workshops of varying lengths by adjusting timeframes allowed for discussion and reporting back, if used in a larger group setting.
- This skit, as presented, takes 8-10 minutes to perform.

The Skit: Al-Anon meetings that are not receptive to Alateen attendance

Skit requires ten participants and the following CAL tools: S-71, S-72, S-73, and P-24/27. Una and Frank will each need the S-73 booklet.

Narrator: The scene begins at a District business meeting where the Group Representatives are sharing their groups' successes and challenges. Let's listen in to hear how the Conflict Resolution tools and the spiritual principles of Concept Five could work at a District meeting.

UNA, Group Representative (GR) #1: A few members of my group have asked if it's okay for Alateens to attend Al-Anon meetings.

DOUG, GR #2 (*matter-of-factly*): We don't allow Alateens in my home group.

THERESA, GR #3: We rarely have Alateens attending my group, but they are always welcomed.

FIONA, GR #4 (*with sass*): My meeting is just fine, and I don't see why we need to change.

BRENDA, Coordinator (*a little whinny*): Can't they just go to their Alateen meetings?

FRANK, GR #4: The closest one I know of is 50 miles away!

DOUG (*shaking head and with trepidation*): I would be very uncomfortable talking about this with my group.

DELORES, District Representative: Well, it sounds like we have a lot of different perspectives here. As we consider how we can work through this situation, I think it would be good to use the *Conflict Resolution Kit*. Its tools may help bring the clarity and guidance we find in our spiritual principles.

ALTHEA, Alternate District Representative (*chipper and bubbly*): That's a great idea, Delores! Before we begin working as a District, can we begin by asking ourselves a few questions from the *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflict* Wallet Card?

DELORES: Another great idea, Althea! I have extra wallet cards for those who need them. Let's go around and each read a few of the questions for our personal consideration. Who would like to start?

(GRs go around, and each read two of the Wallet Card questions.)

UNA: (*Raising hand*) I'll start.

Is there an unresolved conflict in my life that I could be working on?

Do I usually share my opinion with others even though I know it will not be received well?

DOUG: (*Raises his hand to signal he wants to read*)

How do I usually deal with conflict?

Is it successful?

What could I be doing differently?

THERESA:

Am I willing to participate in an informed discussion?

Am I being honest with myself about wanting to resolve the conflict or do I want things my way?

FIONA:

Am I hanging on to resentments which may surface during this discussion?

Can I refrain from interrupting when I disagree?

FRANK:

Does my body language reflect that I am interested?

Do I admit my mistakes and allow others to do so too?

ALTHEA: That sure was enlightening! I think it is important that we keep in mind Concept Five in our discussion. It says, "The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard." The spirit of that Concept is to be open-minded, willing to participate, and create a space that is safe for the minority opinion to be expressed. When we allow time for discussion and consideration, we have access to as many ideas as possible.

KIM, GR #6: Knowing that I will not be judged when I share my ideas and that I have the right to voice them, even though we may not all agree, is an important principle. It helps me feel safe and that my ideas are worth considering.

All: *(Look at each other and nod in agreement. Fiona and Doug have shoulder-shrugging, smirky-faced looks, then nod in agreement.)*

DELORES: These personal reflections and trying to practice Concept Five help me when I anticipate or experience a difficult conversation. Can we move forward and look at another useful piece of the Kit?

All: *(Nodding in Agreement.)*

DELORES: Great. Let's read the first two paragraphs under the "District" section of the *Talk to Each Other* tool and then look at the Tradition Cards (S-72). This will give us practice using these tools before you introduce them to your groups. Who would like to read the first two paragraphs in the booklet?

UNA: I'll read the first paragraph. *(Read the 1st paragraph from District Section of Booklet S-73).*

FRANK: I'll read the second paragraph. (*Read the 2nd paragraph from the same section of Booklet*).

DELORES: Thank you both. We know that our Tradition Cards all give us spiritual guidance. As you look them over, which other Traditions can we use in our discussion?

THERESA: Well, Tradition One asks me to examine my motives and let go of control.

FIONA: And Tradition Two asks me to show kindness and compassion to others even when I may disagree.

FRANK: When I focus on what is being said and not who is saying it, I am practicing Tradition Twelve, principles over personalities.

DELORES: WOW! I think we are onto something that is powerful! I'm sure we can find other Traditions that would help us resolve our differences. Thanks for a great discussion everyone! The Kit also asks some important questions to consider in a discussion:

What do we know?

What don't we know?

What would we like to know?

ALTHEA: I like the way these tools encourage us to ask these questions. It's like a mini Knowledge-Based Decision-Making leading to an informed group conscience process. When I used to hear "KBDM" it baffled me, but these questions "Keep it Simple!"

KIM: Well, one question I have is what does the *Service Manual* say about Al-Anon and Alateen participation?

THERESA: I'm not sure if my group has any Alateen literature or a copy of this tool Kit?

FIONA: How many Alateen groups do we have in the District?

DELORES: Sounds like we could use more information as we discuss this as a District. Would you all like to continue this discussion and get some answers to our questions before you bring the topic up to your groups?

ALL: *(Nod heads in agreement while looking at each other.)*

DELORES: Ok then, we'll put that on the agenda for next month. I look forward to hearing what you all have to share. Thanks for a great discussion. If there's no further business, let's close with the Al-Anon Declaration.

(End of Skit)

The Post-Skit Discussion: *Wallet Card* Questions for Reflection

Each workshop attendee is supplied with the *Wallet Card* (S-71)

Breakout session facilitator leads the group discussion.

1. Is there an unresolved conflict in my life that I could be working on?
2. Do I usually share my opinion with others even though I know it will not be received well?
3. How do I usually deal with conflict? Is it successful? What could I be doing differently?
4. Am I willing to participate in an informed discussion?
5. Am I being honest with myself about wanting to resolve the conflict or do I want things my way?
6. Am I hanging on to resentments which may surface during this discussion?
7. Can I refrain from interrupting when I disagree? Does my body language reflect that I am interested?
8. Do I admit my mistakes and allow others to do so too?

Before the Discussion Closes, ask:

- Was the minority heard?
- Was there anything else from the workshop that you would like to share?

Close the Workshop with the AI-Anon Declaration if desired.

Part Two—Break-Out Session Three

Resolving an Assembly Conflict with the Conflict Resolution Kit

The Skit: Moving the Location of the Area Assembly

The skit requires 11 participants and the following materials: Conflict Resolution CAL, S-71, S-72, and S-73.

Narrator: The scene starts with the Chairperson opening the discussion of moving the Assembly to another part of the Area. People start shuffling in their seat.

CHAIRPERSON: The question of moving the Assembly to a different part of the Area has come up for discussion. I would like to remind you that you have one time at the mic, and a two-minute time limit, and if someone has stated your view, please sit back down. Who would like to open the discussion?

MARY, long-time District Representative (DR): I would like to know why we are even talking about this *again*! We discussed it six years ago.

SALLY, A new Group Representative (GR) (*tentatively comes to the mic*): I don't understand why we would consider moving, hasn't it always been at this location?

BARRY, A seasoned GR: I think it is a good idea. I have had to travel over five hours to get here for the last two and a half years. I would like it to be closer to where I live. I think it's only fair and it's time for a change.

JOYCE, A Coordinator: What purpose does it serve to move locations besides being closer to Barry?

LORIE, Area Treasurer: The cost of this location has been increasing with every Assembly and I am concerned that we may have to start dipping into our ample reserve to meet expenses.

JIM, A GR: Why is it always about money, is that all we care about? This location has worked for years!

RHONDA, A new GR: I don't know how we are going to do this, it just seems like so much work to me, I wouldn't know where to begin. I don't want to move.

NANCY, A Past Delegate: It is our responsibility as trusted servants to use our funds wisely, and there are more things to consider than just the cost of the venue, such as accommodations, meals, and keeping distance in mind to be considerate of the majority.

JILL, A new DR: I believe we need to do what is best for the majority. In my District, we have used the *Conflict Resolution Kit* at my meetings to resolve some of our issues. I would ask that we look at it in our discussions about whether to move locations or not.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you everyone. We have heard several opinions on this matter. I think it would be prudent to use this great tool called *Talk to Each Other—Resolving Conflicts within Al-Anon (S-73)* to look at the pros and cons of changing the Assembly location. Can we have a motion to add this to our agenda this afternoon? Thank you.

(End of Skit)

Small Group Discussion

Break into small groups for discussion as follows:

Using the *Loving Interchange to Resolve Conflict* Wallet Card (S-71), have all participants read the section: “Preparing for Discussion”

- What do I/we know?
 - What don’t I/we know?
 - What would I/we like to know?
 - How can I/we reach a decision that is consistent with my/our spiritual principles?
1. Utilize the back page of the booklet, *Talk to Each Other Resolving Conflicts within Al-Anon (S-73)*, to prepare and guide your discussion on this topic. In this scenario, the chairperson will be the moderator.
 2. The moderator reads the first three paragraphs of “Resolving Conflict In The Area” in the S-73 booklet.
 3. To direct the discussion use *Conflict Resolution using our Twelve Traditions (S-72)*.
 - a. For a smaller group (20-25 people), the moderator can review each Tradition card and the spiritual principle it represents. How does this Tradition or spiritual principle apply to our topic? You can go through all the Traditions or choose a few to discuss.
 - b. A larger group could break into 6 or 12 smaller groups to discuss each Tradition and its spiritual principles and report back to the larger group at a designated time.

The objective of these exercises is not just to arrive at a decision, but to stop talking, listen to the other person’s point of view, look, act, and be interested, and presume goodwill. We always want to keep Concept Five in mind – “The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard.”